A note on the "Rigvedic God Parjanya (पर्जन्य)"

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In **Rigved**, **Parjanya/ पर्जन्य** [1] is generally known as the **God of Rain**. However, the **Sanskrit-English dictionary** [2] gives the meaning of the term **Parjanya** as rain, rain cloud or simply cloud. **Out of the Ten Mandalas of Rigved**, with the exception of **Mandala-2** and **3**; the said word is found in the remaining **Eight Mandalas of Rigved**.

Rigved informs us that the entry of demon **Vritra** caused the break-down of **ऋत/ Rta**, the ancient laws of Nature. This is because, due to failure of the **seasonal rains**, the pre-Rigvedic Rishis/knowledgeable People started believing that demon **Vritra** took the water of whole world in his captivity resulting in the suffering of every living being for a long. When the **Old Vedic Gods/Seven Adityas** could not provide relief from the scarcity of water that was experienced by the People who lived in the North-west part of the Indian Sub-continent for a very long period, then the pre-Rigvedic Rishis after deliberation and discussion, conceived a new **true Warrior God Indra** who was supposed to kill **Vritra** using **Vajra/Thunderbolt** and release the water blocked by the demon to make the rivers of that region including **Saraswati** to flow like earlier time. It means to say that, as per the ancient text, the primary duty of newly designed God **Indra** was to neutralise the effect of **Vritra** (personification of Drought). As per the earlier Vedic belief, before the arrival of **Indra**, God **Varuna** (Senior Aditya) was responsible for the regular rain and land-based water management.

Moreover, **Rigved** also tells us that apart from the Warrior God **Indra**, other Gods like **Rudra**, **Maruts** and **Parjanya** have their distinct roles in bringing the rains and hence water in the Vedic Territory. However, it must be noted here that the manner in which these Three Gods (**Rudra**, **Maruts** and **Parjanya**) cause rains is not the same. **Rudra** is said to be the independent and the **Mightiest Storm God** who has power to kill all living beings as he can shower sharp pointed arrows using a bow. As per the information provided by the Rigvedic Poets, **Maruts** are the sons of **Rudra**. **Maruts** are known as **Thunder and Storm Gods** as their presence is signalled by lightning followed by hailstorm and violent rain.

In the present note, we shall focus our attention mainly on the **Rigvedic God** "**Parjanya"** and his pious act of providing relief to the Vedic World by supplying water in the form of Rain. The verses and hymns consisting the term **Parjanya** have been arranged as per the subjects and then discussed separately in the following sections.

A. Mandala-4 Composer underlines the Role of Parjanya in the Agricultural Activities:

Hymn **Rv-4.57** is generally said to be dedicated to a new agricultural based character **Kshetrapati/ क्षेत्रपति** whose English translation becomes the **Lord of the Fields**. The phrase could be used for the **Guardian Deity** or the **Land Owner**. The hymn contains total eight verses wherein the Poet has briefly introduced several terms that are directly associated with the agricultural activities such as implements (**शून**/ ***Shuna***-ploughshare and **सीर**/ ***Sira***- plough) used to prepare the field for sowing, **कीनाश/*kinasha***- the tiller of the soil, description about the use of oxen to pull the plough for tilling the land etc.

In the **verse-1**, the Composer highlights that if the people become friendly with **Kshetrapati/the Lord of the Field**, then they can easily prosper in life as with the **blessings of the Lord**, they can nourish more **cows** and ***asva***/**ashva** (race quality bulls).

In the **verse-2**, the Poet tells us that due to the grace of the **Lord of Holy Law** (**Rta**), when the People possess more cows (धेनु), then they can obtain a large quantity of milk which can be processed into ***Ghrita***/Ghee.

In the **verse-3**, the Composer hints at, when **Kshetrapati** becomes the **guardian** or **protector of the people**, then they can experience **मधुमान/ sweetness** (means peace and prosperity) everywhere; in plants/herbs (means land), Heaven, waters and Mid-region as well.

In the **verse-4**, the Poet talks about all-round progress and happiness demonstrated by the animals/steeds, men, the tillers who plough the field through their actions.

In the **verse-5**, the Composer uses the compound term **शुनासीरा/ *śunāsīrā*** (**Shuna-**ploughshare and **Sira-**plough) as the **representation (icon) of the Guardian Deity**/ **Kshetrapati** as if the God **speaks through these agricultural implements** (**इमां वाचं जुषेथां**) and states that **He** has made milk in Heaven with the purpose to sprinkle it on Earth to bring joy.

In the **verse-6**, the Poet conveys us that as the **furrows** (**सीता/*Sita*** made using plough) are physically present on land, and we need to worship them. Hope they would bring abundant fruits and hence prosperity (सुभगाससि यथा नः सुफलाससि / *ubhaghāsasi yathā naḥ suphalāsasi*) to all of them. It indirectly means, presence of **furrows** implies now the **field is ready for sowing**.

In the **verse-7**, the Composer requests **Indra** to take the note of the **furrows/ सीता** made by the tiller. He also appeals to **Pushan** to guide ***Sita***/**furrows** so that **she/ सीता** (land/soil prepared for cultivation) would give her milk/produce to the people year after year.

Only in the **verse-8**, (the last verse of the hymn), first time, we find mention of the term **Parjanya**, which is discussed below.

Rv-4.57,8: ***śunaṃ naḥ phālā*** *vi* ***kṛṣantu bhūmiṃ śunaṃ*** *kīnāśā abhi yantu* ***vāhaiḥ*** |
śunam ***parjanyo*** *madhunā payobhiḥ* ***śunāsīrā śunam*** *asmāsu dhattam* ||

शुनं नः फाला वि कृषन्तु भूमिं शुनं **कीनाशा** अभि यन्तु **वाहैः** |
शुनम **पर्जन्यो** मधुना पयोभिः **शुनासीरा** शुनम अस्मासु धत्तम ||

Happily let the shares turn up the **plough land**, happily go the **ploughers** with **the oxen**.
With meath and **milk, Parjanya make us happy**. Grant us prosperity, **Suna and Sira**.

Comment: Since **Parjanya,** the term of our interest is present in the above verse, we shall discuss the same in more detail here. As discussed in the **verse-5**, the phrase **शुनासीरा/** ***śunāsīrā*** in the said verse symbolises **Kshetrapati/the Lord of the Field**. As the ploughmen have already prepared the fields for cultivation (कृषन्तु भूमिं/ ***kṛṣantu bhūmiṃ***) with the help of oxen, now **they are waiting for the rain to come**. Therefore, the Poet appeals to ***śunāsīrā*** means **Kshetrapati** to sprinkle the honey and milk (means rain water, see **verse-5**) in the form of **Parjanya/rain** so that they can produce more grains and prosper in life. In other words, at that time, the cultivators/farmers were totally dependent on **rain** to achieve better yield.

Please bear in mind that most of the crops need **100 to 300 days** to give **good yield**. A crop like **rice** needs plenty of water for proper growth, whereas, the crops such as **millets** and **pulses** require relatively less water for their growth. It means to say that **raining once** or **twice** or **thrice** during the **life cycle of crop** (seeding, growth and maturity period) would not be sufficient to obtain desire yield. Logically speaking, not continuous, but **intermittent rains** are essential for the plants to reach from sowing, early growth to maturity stage.

Based on above discussion. It can be said that here the term **Parjanya** does not mean an **occasional rain** but **many spells of rain** necessary for the development of various crops.

Generally speaking, **Kshetrapati**/ the **Lord of the Fields** is treated as the **Deity** as **He** is believed to protect the fields, to provide good rain needed for crops and healthy livestock; and finally rich harvests. Harvest means time for collection the crops after full development.

Please note that the Poet of the hymn **Rv-4.57** has spoken about the ploughing of the field using oxen only, and nowhere mentioned the type of crop the land owner wants to grow. However, he prays to **Kshetrapati** to provide regular rains to achieve the prosperity every year.

B. Indra and Parjanya appear together:

The central idea of the Rigvedic Poetry is to praise the Warrior God **Indra** in **Yajna** for smiting the Demon **Vritra** who has taken the waters of the world in his custody. As per the established myth, Supreme God **Indra** frequently kills Serpent **Vritra** using **Vajra** and releases waters for the use of People. Even though in many Rigvedic songs, **Indra** is portrayed as the key relief provider from the paucity of water, still some Poets have highlighted the role of **Parjanya** as an **independent rain facilitator**. The Composers of the following verses have placed both of them together in some verses with the intention to demarcate their functions.

Rv-6.52,6: ***indro*** *nediṣṭhamavasāghamiṣṭhaḥ* ***sarasvatī sindhubhiḥ pinvamānā*** |
parjanyo *na oṣadhībhirmayobhuraghniḥ suśaṃsaḥ suhavaḥ piteva* ||

इन्द्रो॒ नेदि॑ष्ठ॒मव॒सागं॑मिष्ठः॒ सर॑स्वती॒ सिन्धु॑भि॒: पिन्व॑माना । प॒र्जन्यो॑ न॒ ओष॑धीभिर्मयो॒भुर॒ग्निः सु॒शंसः॑ सु॒हवः॑ पि॒तेव॑ ॥

Most near, most oft comes **Indra with protection**, and she **Sarasvati**, **who swells with rivers**.
Parjanya, bringing health with herbs, and **Agni**, well lauded swift to listen, **like a father**.

Comment: In the above verse, the Composer from **Bharadwaja clan,** along with **Agni** (of Yajna) has also lauded **Indra** and **Parjanya**. Here the Poet says that with the assistance **Indra**, **Saraswati** and other rivers have started flowing. **Parjanya** has brought herbs/ plants to life. It means that, though **Indra** and **Parjanya** are described as the **water providers**, yet their duties have been depicted to be different. As per the Composer, **Indra** makes the rivers to flow and **Parjanya** looks after the herbs and vegetation.

Rv-8.6,1: ***mahānindro*** *ya ojasā* ***parjanyo vṛṣṭimāniva*** | *stomairvatsasya vāvṛdhe* ||

म॒हाँ इन्द्रो॒ य ओज॑सा प॒र्जन्यो॑ वृ॒ष्टिमाँ॑ इ॑व । स्तोमै॑र्व॒त्सस्य॑ वावृधे ॥

Indra, great in his power and might, and like **Parjanya rich in rain**, is magnified by Vatsa's lauds.

Comment: Surprisingly, in the above verse, the Poet from **Kanva clan** has compared the greatness and strength of the **Warrior God Indra** with the **rain-bearing Parjanya** which is unusual. Generally speaking, **Indra** being the Supreme God of the Vedic Priests, gets the prominent place in several Poems of Praise. In **Rigved**, more than 250 hymns have been devoted to **Indra**. Here the **Mandala-8** Poet from **Kanva** family has treated God **Parjanya** at par with the Prime Deity **Indra**.

Rv-8.21,18: *citra id rājā rājakā idanyake yake **sarasvatīmanu** |*
*__parjanya__ iva tatanad dhi **vṛṣṭyā** sahasramayutā dadat ||*

चित्र इद्राजा राजका इदन्यके यके सरस्वतीमनु । पर्जन्यं इव ततन्द्धि वृष्ट्या सहस्रमयुता ददत् ॥

Citra is King, and only king-lings are the rest who dwell beside **Sarasvati**.

He, like **Parjanya with his rain**, hath spread himself with thousand, yea, with myriad gifts.

Comment: Above verse belongs to **hymn addressed to Indra** wherein the Composer informs us that on the bank of river **Saraswati**, among the several rulers, **Chitra** is only real king and others are kinglets or minor rulers and king **Chitra** is well-known everywhere as the **gift-giver** like **Parjanya** does with his **rains**. Here the Poet has described king **Chitra** as the great giver/donor very similar to **Parjanya**. It means to say that, at the time of composition of this verse, **Parjanya** was known to the people as the **rain-giver**. Probably the Poet has made the observation about **Parjanya** on the basis of his experience in the west side of river **Sindhu** where there was no shortage of water.

Mandala-10 Poet hints at Parjanya as the brother of Indra

Rv-10.55,1: *dūre tan nāma guhyaṃ parācairyat tvā bhīte ahvayetāṃvayodhai |*
*udastabhnāḥ pṛthivīṃ dyāmabhīke **bhrātuḥputrān maghavan** titviṣāṇaḥ ||*

दूरे तन्नाम गुह्यं पराचैर्यत्त्वां भीते अह्वयेतां वयोधै । उदस्तभ्नाः पृथिवीं द्यामभीके भ्रातुः पुत्रान्मंघवन्तित्विषाणः ॥

Far is that secret name by which, in terror, the worlds invoked thee and thou gavest vigour.

The earth and heaven thou settest near each other, and **Maghavan**, **madest bright thy Brother's Children**.

Comment: In the hymn dedicated to **Indra**, the Poet tells us, due to fear (of **Vritra**) all over the world, their names remained hidden for a long. However, due to the courageous act of Indra **Earth** and **Heaven** regained their positions again means, both are placed at the proper locations. **Indra, your brother's sons started shining (*visible*) again**. It implicitly informs us that in the **North-west part of the Indian Sub-continent**, now the terror period (due to **Vritra**) is over and it is **raining all over the places.** The most interesting part of the verse is, it is **not the Supreme God Indra,** but the **sons of his brother are in the lime-light.** Here **Parjanya** could be the **brother of Indra** and **his sons** means **rains**. It means to say that, after a very long duration, during the period of composition of **Mandala-10**; due to better rainfall, the happy days would have come back throughout the **Rigvedic Territory**.

C. Parjanya is praised along with other Gods:

It is interesting to note that the Composers belonging to different clans and generations in their composed Poems have lauded **Parjanya** along with **Other Deities**. However, most of these Songs are addressed either to **Visvedeva** or **Mitra-Varuna** or **Maruts**.

Mandala-6 Poets praise Parjanya and Other Deities in the hymns devoted to Visvedeva

Rv-6.49,6: ***parjanyavātā*** *vṛṣabhā pṛthivyāḥ purīṣāṇi jinvatamapyāni* |
satyaśrutaḥ kavayo yasya gīrbhirjaghata sthātarjaghadākṛṇudhvam ||

पर्जन्यवाता वृषभा पृथि॒व्याः पुरीषाणि जिन्वत॒मप्यां॑नि । सत्यं॑श्रुतः कवयो॒ यस्यं गी॒र्भिर्जगंतः स्थात॒र्जग॒दा कृ॑णुध्वम् ॥

Bulls of the **Earth**, O **Vata and Parjanya**, stir up for us the **regions of the water**.
Hearers of truth, ye, Sages, World-Supporters, increase his living wealth whose songs delight you.

Rv-6.50,12: *te no rudraḥ sarasvatī sajoṣā mīḷhuṣmanto viṣṇurmṛḷantu vāyuḥ* |
ṛbhukṣā vājo daivyo vidhātā ***parjanyāvātā*** *pipyatāmiṣaṃ naḥ* ||

ते नों रु॒द्रः सर॑स्वती स॒जोषा॑ मी॒ळ्हुष्मं॑न्तो॒ विष्णु॑र्मृळन्तु वा॒युः । ऋ॒भु॒क्षा वाजो॒ दैव्यो॑ विधा॒ता प॒र्जन्या॒वातां॑ पिप्यता॒मिषं॑ नः ॥

May **Rudra** and **Sarasvati,** accordant, **Visnu** and **Vayu**, pour down gifts and bless us,
Rbhuksan, Vaja, and divine **Vidhatar**, **Parjanya, Vata** make **our food abundant**.

Rv-6.52,16: ***agnīparjanyāv****avataṃ dhiyaṃ me.asmin have suhavā suṣṭutiṃnaḥ* |
iḷāmanyo janayad garbhamanyaḥ prajāvatīriṣa ā dhattamasme ||

अग्नींपर्जन्या॒ववं॑तं॒ धियं॑ मे॒ऽस्मिन्हवें सुहवा सुष्टु॒तिं नः॑ । इळां॑म॒न्यो ज॒नय॒द्गर्भं॑म॒न्यः प्र॒जाव॑ती॒रिष॒ आ ध॑त्तम॒स्मे ॥

At this my call, O **Agni and Parjanya**, help, swift to hear, **my thought and our laudation**.
One generates **holy food, the other offspring**, so grant us **food enough with store of children**.

Comment: In the three different hymns addressed to **Visvedeva**, the Poet from **Bharadwaja** clan has glorified **Parjanya** with other **Deities.** In the verse **Rv-6.49,6**; the Singer has called **Parjanya** and **Vata** (**पर्जन्यवाता**) as the bulls of Earth and asked them to pour water urgently. Again in the verse **Rv-6.50,12** the Composer has appealed to **Parjanya** and **Vata** to give food in a large quantity. However, in the verse **Rv-6.52,16** along with **Agni**, the Poet has praised **Parjanya**, and yet demanded food in abundance from the God. It means to say that the Composer of **Mandala-6** looks at God **Parjanya** as the **main food provider**.

Mandala-5 Poet lauds Parjanya in the hymns dedicated to Mitra-Varuna

Rv-5.63,4: *māyā vām **mitrāvaruṇā** divi śritā sūryo jyotiś carati citram āyudham |*
*tam abhreṇa vṛṣṭyā ghūhatho divi **parjanya drapsā madhumanta īrate** ||*

मा॒या वां॑ मित्रावरुणा दि॒वि श्रि॒ता सूर्यो॒ ज्योति॑श्चरति चि॒त्रमायु॑धम् । तम॒भ्रेण॑ वृ॒ष्ट्या गू॑हथो दि॒वि पर्ज॑न्य द्र॒प्सा मधु॑मन्त ईरते ॥

Your magic, **Mitra-Varuna**, resteth in the heaven. The **Sun**, the wondrous weapon, cometh forth as light. \
Ye hide him in the **sky with cloud** and **flood of rain, and water-drops, Parjanya, full of sweetness flow.**

Rv-5.63,6: ***vācaṃ su mitrāvaruṇāv irāvatīm parjanyaś** citrāṃ vadati tviṣīmatīm |*
abhrā vasata marutaḥ su māyayā dyāṃ varṣayatam aruṇām arepasam ||

वाच॑ सु मि॑त्रावरुणा॒विरा॑वतीं प॒र्जन्य॑श्चि॒त्रां वद॑ति॒ त्विषी॑मतीम् । अ॒भ्रा व॑सत म॒रुत॒: सु मा॒यया॒ द्यां व॑र्षयतमरु॒णाम॑रे॒पस॑म् ॥

Refreshing is your voice, O **Mitra-Varuna; Parjanya** sendeth out a wondrous mighty voice.
With magic power the **Maruts** clothe them with the **clouds**. Ye **two cause Heaven to rain**, the red, spotless One.

Comment: The Poet from **Atri family** has spoken about **Parjanya** in the hymn addressed to **Mitra and Varuna**. In both verses, the Composer has depicted **Parjanya** as the **rain cloud that brings rain**.

Mandala-1 Poet lauds Parjanya in the verses dedicated to Maruts

Rv-1.38,9: *divā cit tamaḥ kṛṇvanti **parjanyenodavāhena** | yat pṛthivīṃ vyundanti ||*

When they inundate the earth they spread forth darkness even in day time, With the **water-laden rain-cloud**.

Rv-1.38,14: *mimīhi ślokam āsya **parjanya** iva tatanaḥ | gāya gāyatram ukthyam ||*

Form in thy mouth the hymn of praise expand thee like, **a rainy cloud** Sing forth the measured eulogy.

Comment: Above verses are taken from the hymn dedicated to **Maruts**, wherein the Poet in the **verse-4** has mentioned **Maruts** as the sons of **Prishni** (mother), and in the **verse-7** they are described as the sons of **Rudra** (father) who bring the **windless rains** even in the **desert place**. However, in the **verse-9** and **14**, **Griffith** has translated the word **Parjanya** as the **rain cloud** as if the God is under the influence of **Maruts** and hence lauded along with them **for causing violent rain**. It means, the Poet has depicted rain is caused by **Maruts** and **Parjanya** together.

Parjanya as described in the hymns of Mandala-10

Rv-10.65,9: ***parjanyāvātā vṛṣabhā*** *purīṣiṇendravāyū varuṇo mitroaryamā* |
devānādityānaditiṃ havāmahe ye pārthivāsodivyāso apsu ye ||

Parjanya, Vata, **mighty, senders of the rain**, Indra and Vayu, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman,
We call on Aditi, Adityas, and the Gods, those who are on the earth, in waters, and in heaven.

Rv-10.66,10: *dhartāro diva ṛbhavaḥ suhastā* ***vātāparjanyā mahiṣasya****tanyatoḥ* |
āpa oṣadhīḥ pra tirantu no ghiro bhagho rātirvājino yantu me havam ||

May they who bear up heaven, the Rbhus deft of hand, and **Vata and Parjanya of the thundering Bull**.
The waters and the plants, promote the songs we sing; come Bhaga, Rati, and the Vajins to my call.

Comment: Above two verses belong to the hymns dedicated to **Visvedeva** wherein the Composer has linked **Vata** with **Parjanya** and portrayed their aggressive role as ***parjanyāvātā vṛṣabhā*** in the verse **Rv-10.65,9** and as ***vātāparjanyā mahiṣasya*** in the verse **Rv-10.66,10.** However, contents of both verses manifest act of **Vata** and **Parjanya** as the **rain bringers**.

Additionally, following **Mandala-10** verses also indicate **Parjanya** as the **rain giver**.

Rv-10.98,1: *bṛhaspate prati me devatāmihi mitro vā yad varuṇo vāsipūṣā* |
ādityairvā yad vasubhirmarutvān sa ***parjanyaṃśantanave vṛṣāya*** ||

Come, be thou **Mitra, Varuna**, or Pusan, come, O Brhaspati, to mine oblation.
With Maruts, Vasus, or Adityas, **make thou Parjanya pour for Santanu his rain-drops**.

Rv-10.98.8: *yaṃ tvā* ***devāpiḥ*** *śuśucāno agna* ***ārṣṭiṣeṇo*** *manuṣyaḥsamīdhe* |
viśvebhirdevairanumadyamānaḥ pra ***parjanyamīrayā vṛṣṭimantam*** ||

O **Agni** whom **Devapi Arstisena**, the mortal man, hath kindled in his glory.
Joying in him with all the Gods together, **urge on the sender of the rain, Parjanya**.

Comment: The Composer in the verse **Rv-10.98,1** requests **Brihaspati** to convince **Parjanya** to send rain for **Shantanu,** and in the verse **Rv-10.98.8** lauds **Gods** and **Parjanya** for **rain.**

D. Discussion on the hymns addressed to Parjanya:

In **Rigved**, there are **total three hymns** exclusively devoted to God **Parjanya**, two of them are found in **Mandala-7** and one in **Mandala-5**. Although, **Mandala-7** and **Mandala-5** are generally classified as the **Family Mandalas**, but on the basis of geography and vocabulary used, the former is placed in the class of **Five Early Mandalas** and the latter is categorised in **Five Late Mandalas**. Hence we shall first discuss the two hymns of **Mandala-7**.

The Heart of the Matter of the Hymn Rv-7.101 addressed to Parjanya

Rv-7.101,1: *tisro vācaḥ pra vada jyotiragrā yā etad duhre madhudogham ūdhaḥ |*
*sa vatsaṃ kṛṇvan **garbham** oṣadhīnāṃ **sadyo jāto vṛṣabho roravīti** ||*

Speak forth three words, the words which light precedeth, which milk this udder that produceth nectar.
Quickly made manifest, the **Bull hath bellowed**, engendering the germ of plants, the Infant.

Comment: Without directly naming **Parjanya**, here the Poet has described the key characteristic features of the God whose arrival is marked by very loud noise (***tisro vācaḥ***) and appearance of light (due to lightning) ahead of him (***jyotiragrā***). Simultaneously pouring his sweet milk, **He** bellows like a bull, which signals that now the plants/herbs can produce their infants. It means to say that with the arrival of rains, sowing period has begun.

Rv-7.101,2: *yo **vardhana oṣadhīnāṃ** yo **apāṃ** yo viśvasya jagato deva īśe |*
*sa **tridhātu** śaraṇaṃ śarma yaṃsat trivartu jyotiḥ svabhiṣṭy asme ||*

Giver of growth to plants, the God who ruleth over the waters and all moving creatures.
Vouchsafe us triple shelter for our refuge, and threefold light to succour and befriend us.

Comment: As the God is the facilitator of the growth of Plants, **He** rules over the waters and all moving beings of the world. By pouring his milk for a longer time (***tri-dhatu***- means three milch cows), He would provide us triple shelter and triple light which practically means three basic needs of life like Food, Cloth and House to live . Hence it can be said that **Parjanya** plays a critical role in creation and sustenance of the favourable conditions for the survival of the people at the same place.

Rv-7.101,3: ***starīr*** *u tvad bhavati* ***sūta*** *u tvad yathāvaśaṃ tanvaṃ cakra eṣaḥ* |
pituḥ ***payaḥ*** *prati gṛbhṇāti mātā tena* ***pitā vardhate tena putraḥ*** ||

Now he is sterile, now begetteth offspring, even as he willeth doth he change his figure.
The Father's genial flow bedews the Mother; therewith the Sire, therewith the son is nourished.

Comment: Sometimes, he behaves like a barren cow/ ***stari*** (means does not give milk/dry days) and sometimes sends his children/***Suta***, means rain showers. Somehow, **He** manages to take **different forms** at **His** will. On some occasions, Mother/Earth gets ***payah***/rain/juice/water from Father/Heaven, meaning thereby the occurrence of **sudden rain shower** from the sky in absence of proper hint of the prior warning of raincloud like **loud noise** and **lightning** etc. Still, both Father (**Heaven**) and Son (**Parjanya**) earn name and fame due to **this surprise act**.

Rv-7.101,4: *yasmin viśvāni bhuvanāni tasthus* ***tisro dyāvas*** *tredhā sasrur āpaḥ* |
trayaḥ kośāsa upasecanāso madhva ścotanty abhito virapśam ||

In him all living creatures have their being, and the three heavens with triply flowing waters.
Three reservoirs that sprinkle down their treasure shed their sweet streams around him with a murmur.

Comment: Here the Poet says that **All Beings of the world exist in Him (due to Him)**. There are three Heavens, three streams of waters means many sources of water. His three reservoirs are capable to sprinkle his honey (rain) everywhere.

Rv-7.101,5: *idaṃ vacaḥ* ***parjanyāya*** *svarāje* ***hṛdo*** *astv antaraṃ taj jujoṣat* |
mayobhuvo vṛṣṭayaḥ santv asme supippalā oṣadhīr devaghopāḥ ||

May this my song to **Sovran Lord Parjanya** come near unto his heart and give him pleasure.
May we obtain the showers that bring enjoyment, and **God-protected plants** with goodly fruitage.

Comment: First time in the **verse-5** of the hymn **Rv-7.101**; the Composer has introduced the God by name as **Parjanya**, and also highlighted **Him** as an independent ruler (***swaraje***). In the beginning of the verse, the Poet says that, may his spoken words reach **His** heart. May **He** gets pleased with this prayer. May **He** send joy giving rains for all of us. May **God** protect the **fruit-bearing plants**. In other words, the Composer expects the return-gift in the form of a long duration rains from **Parjanya** for praising the God.

Rv-7.101,6: *sa retodhā vṛṣabhaḥ śaśvatīnāṃ tasminn **ātmā jaghata**s tasthuṣaś ca |*
*tan ma **ṛtam pātu śataśāradāya** yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sadā naḥ ||*

He is the Bull of all, and their impregner lie holds the life of all things fixed and moving.
May this rite save me till my **hundredth autumn**, preserve us evermore, ye Gods, with blessings.

Comment: The bull continually (शश्वतीनां) gives his life-sustaining fluid (***reta***) to all. He is the soul/***atma*** of all moving (animals) and stationary things (plants) found in the world. May this eternal truth (**Rta**/शाश्वत सत्य/ ***Shasvat Satya***) give me **hundred autumn** life-span (***śataśāradāya***). O God, your blessings are always needed to live in peace with happiness

logically speaking, when the Composer demands **hundred autumn life** from **Parjanya**, and also wants to live happily as long as he is alive, means at the time of composition of this hymn, he expects **regular rainfall** in the area where he lived. It implies that **Parjanya** is **not an occasional rain**, but the **complete rainy season** which used to appear in the **Rigvedic Territory every year, since the pre-Rigvedic Period**. Its frequent failure first led to the creation of **Demon Vritra**, and then God **Indra** to neutralise the former. Please note that, **only a long term annual rainfall** can assure the progress, prosperity and peace in life. A few spells of rain would not provide abundant food needed for the survival of a big population lived in the **Harappan Civilization**.

Once the seeds are sown in the wet soil, then for proper growth, **intermittent rains** are required during the development stages of the plants. Only mature and healthy plants can bear better quality and quantity of fruits/seeds. Hence periodic rainfall is a must to obtain surplus food grains.

Gist of the hymn Rv-7.102 devoted to Parjanya

This hymn contains only three verses and those are jointly discussed here.

Rv-7.102,1: *parjanyāya pra gāyata divas putrāya mīḷhuṣe | sa no **yava**samichatu ||*

Sing forth and laud **Parjanya**, son of Heaven, who sends the **gift of rain.** May he **provide our pasturage**.

Rv-7.102,1: *yo **garbhamoṣadhīnāṃ** gavāṃ kṛṇoty**arvatām** | **parjanya**ḥpuruṣīṇām ||*

Parjanya is the God who forms in kine, in mares, in plants of earth. And womankind, **the germ of life**.

Rv-7.102,3: *tasmā idāsye havirjuhotā madhumattamam | iḷāṃ naḥ saṃyataṃ karat ||*

Offer and pour into his mouth oblation rich in **savoury juice**: May he for ever **give us food**.

Comment: In the **first verse** of the hymn, the Poet has praised **Parjanya** as the **son of Heaven** who is the great gift giver. The Poet hopes that the God would provide them **grains/*yava.***

In the **second verse**, the Composer has described **Parjanya** as the facilitator /creator of embryos for the growth of all living things including, **plants, cows, steeds and women**.

In the **third verse**, the Poet tells the Priests to offer the God honeyed juice (Soma) in Yajna ritual so that **He** would continue to give them **food desired by them**.

In short, the Composer of the hymn **Rv-7.102** has projected the God **Parjanya** as the main supporter of the life of all types of living beings including plants and animals on Earth.

Main points of the hymn Rv-5.83 dedicated to Parjanya

There are total ten verses in the hymn **Rv-5.83**. Salient features noticed in each of these verse are as given below.

Verse-1: Parjanya is described as a **roaring bull** who sets his **life-giving fluid** in the plants.

Verse-2: Parjanya smites trees, demons and when thunders, kills evil characters.

Verse-3: Parjanya, like an able charioteer**,** makes the **messengers of rain** to move forward. **He roars like lion**, and fills the sky with rain-clouds.

Verse-4: Parjanya arrives **with wind and lightning** to moisten Earth, then plants shoot up.

Verse-5: Before **him,** Earth bows down**, cattle shiver**, and **plants take different forms**.

Verse-6: O Maruts, bring rain from Heaven, come with thunder and pour down water for us.

Verse-7: Roar and thunder. Come running like a chariot and implant the embryos. Level the Land surface with the rain water.

Verse-8: Lift mighty vessel or sack of water and pour down the same. Wet Earth and Heaven.

Verse-9: Parjanya, your roar and thunder slays evil forces. Whole World and Earth rejoice with your arrival.

Verse-10: You have rained rain (***avarṣīr varṣam***), now withhold it. You made the desert places easy to travel. You made plants to grow for our consumption as food.

Comparing "Parjanya" described in Two hymns of Mandala-7 with a Mandala-5 hymn

Mandala-7 Poet from the **Vasistha clan** in the two hymns (**Rv-7.101** and **102**) has depicted **Parjanya** as the **Normal Rain God** who is less aggressive or relatively non-violent in behaviour as in both hymns there is no description about the destructive acts of the God. However, **Mandala-5** Composer from the **Atri family** in some verses of the hymn **Rv-5.83** has portrayed **Parjanya** as **very bullish** and **fearful God** who does not mind to destroy plants/trees (see verse **Rv-5.83,2**). In the verse **Rv-5.83,5;** Poet has said that even the livestock is afraid of the God.

In fact, in the verse **Rv-5.83,6**; the Poet has termed the God as **Maruts**.

Rv-5.83,6: *divo no vṛṣṭim **maruto** rarīdhvam pra pinvata vṛṣṇo aśvasya dhārāḥ |*
arvāṅ etena stanayitnunehy apo niṣiñcann asuraḥ pitā naḥ ||

Send down for us the rain of heaven, **ye Maruts,** and let the **Stallion's flood descend in torrents**.
Come hither with this thunder while thou pourest the waters down, our heavenly Lord and Father.

In other words, the characteristic features of **Parjanya** depicted in the hymn **Rv-5.83** closely matches with the Rigvedic God **Maruts** (plural) or else **Parjanya** of the hymn **Rv-5.83** is directly under the influence of **Maruts** and therefore, it is said that **Parjanya roars like lion**, as if **He** behaves like **Maruts**. However, in the **Mandala-7** verse **Rv-7.101,1**; the Poet **Vasistha** has described **Parjanya** in the mild words as who **bellows like a bull**.

In the last verse of the hymn **Rv-5.83**; (see verse **Rv-5.83,10**) the Poet has reported **excess rain** everywhere (***avarṣīr varṣam***) including **desert**, and then appealed to God to stop the rain for some time as it may damage the crop.

Otherwise, the Poets of both Mandalas have described **Parjanya** as the provider of abundant food, and the facilitator and sustainer of new life on Earth.

E. Mandala-9 references of "Parjanya":

As **Mandala-9** is exclusively devoted to **Soma Pavamana**, and **Rigved** informs us that the **Soma plant** was originated in the mountains of **North-west corner of the Indian Sub-continent**. However, several Rigvedic Poets have directly linked the availability of water (**Parjanya)** to the growth of the **Soma** plant. Following four verses convey us about the role of **Parjanya** in cultivation of **Soma**.

Rv-9.2,9: *asmabhyamindavindrayurmadhvaḥ pavasva dhārayā* | ***parjanyo vṛṣṭimāniva*** ||

Indu as, Indra's Friend, on us **pour with a stream of sweetness**, like **Parjanya sender of the rain**.

Rv-9.22,2: *ete* ***vātā ivoravaḥ parjanyasyeva*** *vṛṣṭayaḥ* | *agneriva bhramā vṛthā* ||

Swift as wide winds they lightly move, like **rain-storms of Parjanya**, like the flickering flames of burning fire.

Rv-9,82,3: ***parjanyaḥ*** *pitā mahiṣasya parṇino nābhā pṛthivyā giriṣukṣayaṃ dadhe* |
svasāra āpo abhi ghā utāsaran saṃ ghrāvabhirnasate vīte adhvare ||

Parjanya is the Father of the Mighty Bird, **on mountains**, in **earth's centre hath he made his home**.
The **waters too have flowed**, the Sisters, to the kine; he meets the pressing-stones at the beloved rite.

Rv-9.113,3: ***parjanyavṛddhaṃ*** *mahiṣaṃ taṃ sūryasya duhitābharat* |
taṃ gandharvāḥ pratyaghṛbhṇan taṃ some rasamādadhurindrāyendopari srava ||

Hither hath **Surya's Daughter** brought the **wild Steer** whom **Parjanya nursed**.
Gandharvas have seized bold of him, and in the Soma laid the juice. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Comment: In the verse **Rv-9.2,9**; the Composer says that **Parjanya** is responsible for bringing the rain in the area where **Soma** grows.

In the verse **Rv-9.22,2**; the Poet has compared the moving/gushing winds with the heavy or stormy rains brought by **Parjanya**.

The Poet of the verse **Rv-9.82,3**; has specifically called **Parjanya** as the **father** of mighty bird means **Soma** who has made mountain, his dwelling place as **the centre of Earth**.

Verse **Rv-9.113,3** tells us mythical story of **Suryaa** the daughter of the Sun brought **Soma** which was nursed by **Parjanya** and then regularly cultivated by the **Gandharvas**.

F. Hymn Rv-7.103 manifests "Parjanya is the God of Rainy Season":

In a wonderfully composed **hymn Rv-7.103;** the Poet from **Vasistha** clan has cleverly superimposed the occurrence of **two distinct annual events** during the **Rainy Season** in the form of **breeding of frogs** over the ancient **Guru-Kula system** used by **Vedic Rishis** to train their future generation as the **Priests** or **Brahmins**. As a matter of fact, the activities performed by the **Frogs** and **Brahmanas/Brahmins** at the **onset of rainy season** serve as the base for composition of hymn. It means to say that as the frogs use rainy season to create their offspring, similarly during rainy season, Vedic Rishis begin to shape the new pupils in the field of Vedic Rituals. Please note that here the use of the term **Brahmanas** means the **Students** and not the **Priests**. Main points described in the ten verses of the hymn have been summarised as follows.

Verse-1: With the appearance of **Parjanya**, the **frogs** who were inactive for a year, started making noise. The **Brahmanas** (students) too adhered to strict routine (***vrata***) as directed.

Verse-2: As soon as Heavenly water fell on their bodies, the frogs who were lying in a pool as the dry leather-bags, began to sing together like lowing of cows with their calves.

Verse-3: For all those who were yearling and thirsty for a long, rains brought the major relief. As a son follows the voice of his father, says "***akhkhala***" means repeats a word/sound, and in the same way, each one (frog) approached/followed the other who began to speak earlier.

Verse-4: One (a male frog) climbed onto another (female frog), and then the pair has revelled in the discharge of waters. When the frog rained upon, then it jumps forward, speckled one mixes its voice in the green one.

Verse-5: Each one tries to copy the voice of other, as a student that of his teacher. When all of them (frogs) speak together, as if each one is repeating eloquence upon the waters.

Verse-6: In this verse, the Poet has brought out two different sounds and colours of the frogs. One bellows like a cow, other bleats like a goat. Similarly, one has speckled skin and other is green in colour. Though are commonly identified by the same name, yet they have different forms (means male and female frogs are not alike). They enjoy their diverse speeches/voices.

Verse-7: Like the Brahmins (senior students) sit and sing together for the late night (***atiratre***) **Soma ritual**, the frogs also come together to celebrate the yearly rainfall/rainy season.

Verse-8: The Brahmins (senior students) have pressed Soma for their for their year-long Soma rite, have raised their voice (as they are loudly chanting mantras together). The Adhvaryus (Priests) who were sitting next to sacred fire, are sweating due to heat and all are visible.

Verse-9: They (Brahmins) as the divine order or God's wish, for twelve (months) did not break the law, means kept it in mind, and eagerly waited for season (rainy) to come. In a year, only when the rainy season arrives, they offer hot milk (in the Yajna ritual) to feel relaxed.

Verse-10: The cow-bellow, goat-bleat, speckled one and green one (different frogs) have given us the goods/treasures. The frogs have given hundred cows, and also lengthened our life for pressing **Soma** for thousand times.

Understanding the Message hidden in the hymn Rv-7.103

As in the hymn **Rv-7.103**, the Poet has intertwined the natural way of **breeding of frogs** with the process of learning of Vedic rituals by the **brahmanas** (students) under the guidance of a senior teacher (Rishi), and hence we shall have independent discussion on these two topics.

1. Breeding of Indian frogs during rainy season:

With the onset of monsoon, in India, the breeding season of the frogs commences [3]. After a few rains, when temporary ponds are formed, the male bullfrogs become very active, and to attract females, they begin to produce sound which is known as croaking. The calls are very deep and sound travels across the wetlands. When a female selects a mate, the male frog climbs onto her back in a position known as **amplexus** (refer to description given in the verses **Rv-7.103,2 to 4**). In this position, the male holds the female tightly while she releases eggs into the water. Then male fertilizes these eggs externally with his sperms. The fertilized eggs float on the surface of still and warm water. Under suitable conditions, bullfrog eggs usually hatch within **few days**. Warmer temperatures may cause eggs to hatch more quickly. After about 1 to 2 weeks, the **legless tadpoles** come out from the eggs. Initially, they survive on the yolk of their egg, but after a few days, they feed on the traces of plant matter and vegetation found in the water. **Please note that with their tails, the tadpoles can swim and survive in water only**. It means that, calm and warm water found in natural ponds aids them for survival.

The transformation of a tadpole into a proper shape of frog-let is known as metamorphosis. It takes a few months to develop a tadpole into a young frog. Therefore, the breeding season of

the Indian bullfrog is generally aligned with the heavy seasonal monsoon rains i.e. from **June to September**.

Now coming to the verse **Rv-7.103,10**; wherein the Poet says that "the frogs have given them (the Priests/Vedic Aryas) hundred cows, and also lengthened their life-span for pressing **Soma** for thousand times".

This can be interpreted as, when the more number of frogs are born in a particular rainy season, means that area received adequate rainfall during the monsoon season. Also, a longer duration croaking of the frogs symbolises a large amount of precipitation. More rain in a region means all-round better vegetation, better vegetation leads to higher growth in the population of cattle, and increase in the number of cattle means a notable improvement in wealth/riches/ prosperity and comfort, and hence good mental cum physical health.

Generally speaking, in many tropical countries, croaking of frogs for a long duration is considered as the positive sign of getting seasonal rains in sufficient quantity.

2. Training of the Brahmanas/Brahmins (students) in the field of Yajna Rituals:

In the hymn **Rv-7.103**; believed to be addressed to **Frogs** (**मण्डूका/*manduka***), the term **Brahmana** appears thrice in different verses. In the **verse-1**; the Composer has compared the croaking of the frogs with the sound created by the **Brahmanas** as a part of their **vrata**. In a practical sense, the word **Vrata/ व्रत** means a single- minded devotion or dedication for a particular cause or way of life. Therefore, in the hymn **Rv-7.103**; the term **Brahmanas** means the students who are sincerely undergoing training in the area of **Yajna** ritual. This is because, in the **verse-5**; the Poet has quoted an example of a **student repeats what his teacher says**, meaning thereby, a learner is following the instructions of his master. As there is no mention of the terms like **Rishi**, **Vipra** and **Kavi** in the entire hymn, the term **Brahmanas** stands for the **students** who were completely engaged in the process of learning Vedic Practices. **Vrata** also means a "Vow" or "Resolution" representing a commitment or observance for a cause.

Here the basic question arises, what was the connection between the **Brahmanas (ब्राह्मणा)** and the **rainy season**?

As a matter of fact, in India, every year, a new academic session of most of the schools and colleges commences with the onset of **rainy season/monsoon**, i.e. June or July month.

As depicted in the **verse-1**; in the beginning, in a **Guru-Kula** system, a newly joined batch of the pupils would be told by a renowned teacher (Senior Priest or Rishi) to memorise already composed mantras, word by word. Initially, the major stress would have been given on the proper pronunciation of every archaic word. This loud but collective recitation of the words would have made the Poet of hymn **Rv-7.103** to compare the speech of the **Brahmanas /students** with the croaking of the frogs that is heard with the arrival of rainy season. Please remember that once the rainy season starts, then the students cannot do the exercise of memorization in an open space, but they need a proper shelter do so.

In the **verse-3**; the Composer has spoken about a son taking a learning lesson from his Father. As there is no mention of mother, means the **Brahmin boys** were being trained away from home, in a Guru-Kula.

In the verses **Rv-7.103,7** and **8**; along with the term **Brahmanas/ब्राह्मणा**, there is reference of **Soma ritual**. The most striking feature here is the mention of **Soma ritual** either in the late night (**अतिरात्रे/*atiratre***) or overnight. The newly joined students who have just started learning the basics of Vedic ritual, cannot perform the late night Soma rite. It means to say that the **senior pupils** (who had joined the **Guru-Kula** two or three years ago and had been taught how to prepare **Soma juice** from the dried stalks, and had undergone training in Yajna rite) would have decided to celebrate the arrival of rainy season/monsoon on a grand scale. This has been hinted by the Poet in the **verse-7** in which he says that the **Brahmanas have waited for a year to celebrate that day**. In the **verse-8**, the Poet speaks about preparation of **Soma** juice for the ritual and then raising the voice by the **Brahmanas** at the time of special event. It implicitly tells us about the presence of earlier batch (es) of the students in **Guru-Kula**.

In the **verse-10**, the Composer has expressed his desire to press **Soma** for thousand times, if he lives for many years. This is based on his assumption of receiving good rains every year. As discussed earlier (see **Mandala-9 verses**), **Soma plant** needs plenty of water to grow. The Poet understands the fact that only with the blessings of God **Parjanya**, this is possible.

Please note that in the entire hymn, the Poet has used the term **Parjanya** only once, that is, in the **verse-1**. However, based on the reported events of **breeding of the Frogs** and the **training of the Brahmanas/students in Guru-Kula**, that are intentionally linked to a special term ***samvatsara*/संवत्सर** (found in the verses **Rv-7.103,1**; **7** and **9)**, it can be said that in the hymn **Rv-7.103**; the term **Parjanya** definitely means **rainy season** or **monsoon**. Please bear in mind that for **normal rain**, the Poet has used the terms like **Vrishti** (**वृष्टि**) and **Varsha** (**वर्षा**).

Parjanya is nothing but the synergistic action of Wind, Agni/the Sun and Samudra/Sea

Now take an intense look at the following verse dedicated to God **Agni**.

Rv-8.102,5: *huve **vāta**svanaṃ kaviṃ **parjanyakrandyaṃ sahaḥ** | **agniṃ samudravāsasam*** ||

हुवे वातंस्वनं कविं पर्जन्यंक्रन्द्यं सहः । अग्निं संमुद्रवांससम् ॥

I call the **Sage who sounds like wind**, the might that like **Parjanya** roars, **Agni who clothes him with the sea**.

Comment: In the above verse, the Composer has designated **Agni** as the Sage-Poet, who moves like **wind** (***Vata***), and roars like **Parjanya**. However, re-interpreted verse is as under.

The **Mandala-8 Poet** in the above verse implicitly tells us that it is due to the **heat of the Sun** (***Agni***, high temperature of summer), **Sea air**/***Vata***/wind (of ***Samudra***) becomes lighter and warm. This **hot air**, while moving on the surface of sea, picks up the micro size water droplets/moisture (**Agni clothes him with the sea---Griffith Translation**) along with it and being lighter, it rises quickly in the sky, which upon reaching certain height gets transformed into the **rain clouds**. Finally, **sea air** (***Vata***) loaded with water droplets/moisture means in the form of **roaring rain-clouds** brings rain on the land.

Above verse conveys us the factual story the **origin of Rigvedic God Parjanya from the Sea,** but that has been described in a poetic style. If we correlate above description with the Rigvedic phrase ***Apam Napat***, then **Parjanya** could also mean the **Child of Waters**.

Note: There are many Vedic Scholars who frequently term the **Rigvedic Poets/Vedic Aryas as the nomadic and illiterate People**. However, the description given in the above verse about the formation of **Parjanya/rain cloud** would definitely serve as an eye-opener for all of them.

From the above discussion, it is crystal clear that **Parjanya** does not mean an occasional rain, but it definitely stands for a special characteristic feature of the God who brings the rain for relatively very long period. In other words, when the downpour continues for the extended period or many days, then it can be said that God **Parjanya** is in action.

As the term **Parjanya** is absent in **Mandala-2 and 3,** which implies that the Rigvedic Priests possibly spent most of the time in the arid region (adjoining **Cholistan** desert located in present-day Pakistan) where regular and a longer duration rainfall was not experienced.

Hence it would be more appropriate to consider Rigvedic God **Parjanya** as a **long duration seasonal rains** every year received by the **Indian Sub-continent** during the months **June to September** which is popularly known as the **Monsoon**.

A Brief Introduction to the Indian Monsoons [3]

Indian monsoon is generally defined a seasonal reversal of wind direction accompanied by significant changes in precipitation. Monsoon is a term derived from the Arabic word "***Mausim***", meaning season. It was first used by **Arabic navigators/traders** to describe the seasonal winds of the Arabian Sea.

There are two types of monsoon observed in the Indian Sub-continent:

- **The South-west monsoon.**
- **The North-east monsoon.**

The **South-west monsoon** is also known as the **summer monsoon** as it moves basically from South-west to North-east direction. Its span is **June to September**, brings about 75 % of the annual rainfall in India. The South-west monsoon is the main rainy season of India and hence also termed as the lifeline for the country's economy and ecology.

The **North-east monsoon** is also called the **winter monsoon**, as it blows from North-east to South-west off the coast of South and South-east India, and East Asia during **October to December**. It brings rain mostly in **North-east and East-coast states of India**.

Monsoons occur due to changes in atmospheric pressure which are caused by different rates of heating and cooling of continents and oceans.

As far as India is concerned, monsoon rains are critical for the agricultural sector as food grain prices are closely linked to a good monsoon. A good monsoon generally means prosperity and well-being of the people and bad monsoon always means distress. A delay or failure of monsoon season can affect food supply, livelihoods, and overall economy of India.

In the tropical country like India, the frogs generally breed in the **monsoon season**. This is because, due to heavy seasonal rains, everywhere, temporary pools are formed that are needed for the mating of frogs, then survival of their eggs and finally the development of offspring. It means to say that the arrival of **rainy season** instigates the frogs to go for mating.

G. References:

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